GI SPECIAL 2#B34

NO HELP IN SIGHT: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW

An American army soldier looks out onto the cemetery from his outpost at a building in the besieged city of Najaf Aug. 17, 2004. (AP Photo/Jim MacMillan)

"We're Losing People Everyday, And For Not A Good Reason,"

"I Honestly Think We're Fighting This War For Oil"

August 17, 2004 By MIKE MORRIS, Union Democrat Online, Tuolumne County, California

Ward Stone sits bare-chested, revealing a bruise-like mark over his heart.

The mark is actually the remnants of where a bullet hit Stone — a Marine Corps lance corporal — while he fighting was in Fallujah, Iraq, on Easter.

"Their whole country is so messed up," Stone said of Iraqis. "We're trying to help them. Kids are running around the streets carrying AK-47s. The women are treated terrible. Guys are allowed to have three wives and they treat them horrible."

Stone, once eager to fight in Iraq, doesn't want to return to the war-torn country.

"We're losing people everyday, and for not a good reason," he said.

The Marine said the war will continue to be a key campaign issue in the November election.

"Among my group of friends, we don't want Bush to get elected," he said. "We feel if Bush gets re-elected we will go back to Iraq, which we don't want to do.

"I honestly think we're fighting this war for oil. Why else would we be there? We have Saddam Hussein. I personally think Osama bin Laden's dead."

A 19-year-old Copperopolis man, Stone was awarded the Purple Heart, a high honor given to members of the U.S. armed forces injured during battle.

Not only was Stone shot in the chest, but two small spots show where a bullet entered and exited his left arm. A bullet also skimmed his right leg, and he suffered shrapnel injuries to his left leg. While Stone was wearing bullet-proof chest protection, his legs were covered only by thin camouflage pants.

"I just heard rounds cracking by my face," he said. "It was hot. I was lying on the ground with holes all over my body. It felt like someone threw firecrackers at me. There was a hot sensation on my arm and chest. It felt like someone took a sledgehammer and hit me as hard as they could."

While standing guard in a 50-foot tower overlooking a Fallujah train station, Stone and fellow Marine, Lance Cpl. Torrey Gray, were shot at by "terrorists who just want to kill Americans," as Stone put it.

Gray, a 19-year-old from Illinois, was shot in the neck and died from massive bleeding. "The grossest thing I saw in Iraq was watching another guy bleed to death and I couldn't do anything about it," Stone said, referring to Gray.

Still being shot at, Stone said he hid behind Gray's body.

"I was too afraid to come down," he said. "If I moved they would see I'm still alive and shoot me. I was more scared about dying than thinking about how much it hurt. I just wanted to climb down that tower."

But about 30 minutes after the attack, Stone's squad leader signaled him to come down.

"It was scary," Stone said of his near-death experience. "I never want to do it again."

While at the base's hospital, Stone called his then-fiance, Lyndsey Ego, on her cell phone. She was driving to Ione for Easter dinner with Ward's mother and grandparents.

"I didn't know it was Easter Sunday," he recalled. "I was too drugged up."

Lyndsey said Ward asked her to pull over from the highway.

"He said, ‘I got shot.' And I started crying," she said. "It was a big mess. Everyone was all depressed during Easter. It was a bad Easter."

Cheryl Stone remembers spending the day crying over her wounded son.

"You feel so bad the other boy died, but you're so happy he survived," she said yesterday while sobbing. "It was almost like your worst nightmare come true. It was so intense that my heart broke for him and the other family."

Born in Sonora and raised in Copperopolis, Stone said he always knew he wanted to be in the military.

Ward Stone attended Bret Harte High School before transferring to Vallecito High School. His parents divorced when he was a sophomore.

After graduating from high school in 2002, Ward met Lyndsey through mutual friends and the pair began dating.

In March 2003, Stone made a four-year commitment to the Marine Corps. He went to a Southern California boot camp for three months and then did two more months of training before being stationed at Twentynine Palms, a Marine base between Bakersfield and Nevada.

Stone went to prepare for Iraq last December in Japan. He was not training for combat, but rather how to help maintain order in unstable situations, such as calming people down during stressful times.

On his 19th birthday, Stone learned of Saddam Hussein's Dec. 13 capture.

The young soldier was then stationed in Kuwait for three weeks before arriving to his base of Al Asad, Iraq, in March.

He spent nearly two months working on what he was trained in Japan to do.

But, "everything went down the drain when we went to Fallujah," he said.

Less than two weeks after getting shot, Stone returned to combat in Fallujah.

But instead of fighting, Stone said, he wanted to visit with family back in Calaveras County and attend Gray's funeral in Illinois.

"I thought I could go home. They said it wasn't possible. They said this is my job," he said of his military bosses. "They're all like, 'It's your job. You have to do it. You're a Marine.'"

Once back with his platoon, Stone returned to a difficult soldier existence.

The soldiers didn't shower for a month, Stone said, adding they ate "gross" food, like chili and beef ravioli, out of sealed packets.

He said all day and night snipers would shoot at him and the other soldiers, who were in foxholes at a cemetery filled with large flies, rats and other feral animals.

"I'm sure we were killing people," he said. "I mean we were shooting at them."

After a couple of weeks of fighting in Fallujah, Stone returned to his Al Asad base until being sent back to Twentynine Palms last month.

Stone had five days off, so he and Lyndsey, 20, of Douglas Flat, drove to Las Vegas and were married July 16.

Now, Ward has a few weeks of leave. He and Lyndsey are staying at a Murphys hotel until Friday, when they'll head back to Twentynine Palms and finish moving into their house before Ward resumes training.

Before returning to Calaveras County a few days ago, Stone had to take a post-combat class that focused on being a civilian again.

"It really let us express our feelings and get stuff off our minds," he said.

Stone, who is visiting with friends and family throughout the week, said he's glad to be back in the states and eating home-cooked food.

He'll train for several months — including a month at the Marine Corps' Mountain Warfare Training Center east of the Sonora Pass — before he's scheduled to return to Iraq next March.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and in Iraq, and information about other social protest movements here in the USA. **Send requests to address up top. For copies on web site see:http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/**

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Soldier From Fort Hood Dead; "His Last Day He Just Wanted To Be Here, He Didn't Want To Go."

August 16, 2004 By LYNN BREZOSKY Associated Press Writer

EDINBURG, Texas-

Army Spc. Mark Zapata, 27, died Sunday morning when his tank came under fire in Najaf, his family told The Associated Press from their Edinburg home Monday.

Zapata graduated from Edinburg North High School and had been in the military for seven years, said his brother, Michael Zapata.

He was the third soldier from this Mexican border city to be killed since the war began March 20, 2003, the ninth from the Rio Grande Valley.

Mark Zapata was with Fort Hood's 1st Cavalry Division and went to Iraq in January.

He returned to Edinburg for three weeks last month before being sent back. He spent his time visiting friends and family in Texas and northern Mexico and attending the funeral of a relative who died while he was home.

Michael Zapata said his brother was proud of his mission but didn't want to return.

"He said it was hell, the fighting. He couldn't sleep. It was difficult," Michael Zapata said. "His last day he just wanted to be here, he didn't want to go. My brother died giving life to everybody."

His last call to his mother was from Dallas, when he told her he'd be out in the field and out of phone or Internet contact for the next month.

Zapata was single, but loved children and was a volunteer firefighter and paramedic at home, said his cousin, 29-year-old Dennis Garcia.

Iraqi children had given the soldier coins and other trinkets to bring home for his mother, and in return he took Iraqi children candy from just over the border in Mexico.

Zapata's tour was scheduled to end in October,

A stream of relatives and friends gathered at the family home, adorned with yellow and red white and blue ribbons and a sign which read "Our hearts are with our troops." They

said they had few other details on Zapata's death, which they were informed of Sunday afternoon.

GET SOME TRUTH: CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation, the cuts to veterans' benefits, or the dangers of depleted uranium - is the first reason Traveling Soldier is necessary. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. http://www.traveling-soldier.org/

Marine Killed in Anbar Province

August 17, 2004 The Associated Press

A Marine assigned to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action in Anbar Province on Tuesday, the military reported.

Anbar includes the cities of Fallujah, Ramadi and Qaim on the Syrian border.

EAST BAGHDAD ATTACK KILLS ONE SOLDIER, 3 ARMORED VEHICLES OUT OF ACTION; NUMBER OF WOUNDED NOT REVEALED

August 17, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release Number: 04-08-19C & The Associated Press

BAGHDAD - **One Task Force Baghdad soldier was killed and three armored vehicles were disabled** by a series of anti-Iraqi force attacks Aug. 16 in eastern Baghdad.

The attacks took place Monday in the east of the city.

A number of soldiers were also wounded in the attacks. The wounded were evacuated to a medical treatment facility.

TF Baghdad soldiers were ambushed with improvised explosive devices and rocket-propelled grenades starting around 3:30 p.m. Aug. 16.

War In To Basra;
British Soldier Killed, Others Wounded

17 Aug 2004 Michael Georgy, (Reuters) & Al Bawaba

British troops have fought gunbattles with Shi'ite militiamen in the oil port city of Basra, **suffering two casualties**, a spokesman at the Ministry of Defence says.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence says. "I can confirm that one British soldier has been killed and that there are other injuries," said the spokesman on Tuesday, who declined to give further details.

Explosions and assault rifle fire were heard across the city as a number of small engagements broke out.

Witnesses said militiamen loyal to radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr used rocket-propelled grenades in the firefight.

A hotel was damaged and two Iraqi civilians were wounded.

Earlier in the day, foreigners travelling in three British vehicles were taken to safety by British troops in the Basra after their convoy was hit by a roadside bomb, a spokeswoman for the British military said.

It was not immediately clear how many foreigners were in the vehicles, the spokeswoman said, adding none were hurt in the incident in central Basra.

Witnesses said Sadr's militiamen attacked the vehicles and that at least one of the foreigners was wounded.

Witnesses said British troops battled Shi'ite militiamen in the oil port city of Basra as darkness fell.

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3 CARABINIERI WOUNDED;
Italian Officers Say Sadr Not Extremist

17 August (AGI) - Palermo, Italy & ROME, Aug 17 (AFP)

Three members of the Italian military contingent in Nasiriyah, southern Iraq, were injured when their patrol was hit by rocket and small arms fire, the ANSA news agency said Tuesday.

It said two suffered slight injuries and were treated at the scene while the third was more seriously hurt and transported to Kuwait, where his life was reported to be not in danger, military medical sources said.

Italian officers in Iraq said the assailants appeared to belong to extremist fringe elements rather than to the forces of the Shiite chief, Moqtadr Sadr, according to Ansa.

The carabiniere now in hospital in Kuwait City on the danger list, comes from Collesano in the Province of Palermo. His name is Vincenzo Cuccia, and he is a member of the Seventh Trentino Alto Adige regiment whose HQ is in Laives (Bolzano).

Firefights In Najaf; U.S. Vehicles Burned

17-08-2004 Al Bawaba

On Tuesday morning, fresh fighting sparked off between the two sides, reported *Al Jazeera*.

US military vehicles were burnt in the fighting, the report said, quoting reliable sources.

Two of the casualties were killed when gunfire hit the office of the Badr Brigades, the military wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which is not involved in the fighting, according to Ridha Taqi, a SCIRI official.

"We Win, We Lose. We Lose, We Lose."

Cemetery Fight Haunts U.S. Soldiers;

U.S. Army soldiers fight in the streets of Najaf, Iraq, on Monday. The Associated Press, Sources: Department of Defense, The Associated Press, www.iraqbodycount.net

(THANKS TO B WHO EMAILED THIS IN. B WRITE: "IRAQ SUMMED UP AKA THE FALLUJAH DILEMMA: There's nothing good that can come of it, said an Army operations officer, laying out the possible outcome of any strike on the mosque. *We win, we lose. We lose, we lose."*)

8.10.04 By Karl Vick, Washington Post Foreign Service, NAJAF, Iraq

Bats flapped out of crypts, startling soldiers creeping through the cemetery with guns up. Graves opened beneath their combat boots. **And an old enemy displayed a new professionalism, darting in clearly practiced moves between tombstone and mausoleum to stalk the Americans from above ground and below.**

In the battle to control one of the world's largest graveyards, U.S. Marines and soldiers say they are coping with a lot, including lingering regret. The vast cemetery in Najaf is sacred to Shiite Muslims, perhaps 2 million of whom lie buried in miles of desert adjoining the shrine of Imam Ali, son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad.

Soldiers involved in the fighting described how many of the most recent graves are marked by photos, which crumble when U.S. forces shell the cemetery walls to reach the militiamen hiding within.

"Wives, daughters, husbands," said Sgt. Hector Guzman, 28, of the 1st Cavalry Division's 5th Regiment. "You just know you're destroying that tomb."

The Houston native shook his head. "It doesn't feel right sometimes."

"We feel bad that we're destroying, that we're desecrating graves and such," added Staff Sgt. Thomas Gentry, 29, of Altoona, Pa. "That's not what we want to do."

On Tuesday, while senior commanders huddled to discuss an endgame, the cemetery once again doubled as a killing field.

While U.S. armored vehicles probed the huge brown expanse of graves and mausoleums, a small armada of warplanes, helicopters and armed drones circled overhead. When the vehicles drew fire, spotters located the attackers and radioed the coordinates to a crowded, vaguely air-conditioned room in a Marine operating base on the north side of Najaf.

"Looking for clearance for Reaper," a junior cavalry officer chirped late Tuesday afternoon. A patrol had spotted a sniper, but his perch was close enough to the shrine of Ali that permission to fire could come only from a senior officer, who after several minutes gave it from a base 15 miles away. With two Hellfire missiles, an Apache helicopter destroyed the building where the sniper was hiding.

"There's nothing good that can come of it," said an Army operations officer, laying out the possible outcome of any strike on the mosque. "We win, we lose. We lose, we lose."

The battle for the graveyard went on for 36 hours. In the end, the Marines counted four of their own dead and more than 300 militiamen. But veterans of the battle said the lopsided casualty count -- disputed by Sadr's officials -- did no justice to the weirdness of fighting on a sweeping landscape that venerates death.

"You're on top of the vehicle, you can see forever, but all you're looking at is tombs," said Gentry, of the Army regiment's Bravo Company.

"It was like New Orleans meets Baghdad," said one Army officer.

The jumble of tombs, mausoleums and catacombs also made it treacherous ground to fight on. **Militia fighters hid underground and overhead, soldiers and Marines recalled. "Most of the time," Guzman said, "it was like jungle warfare, only without the jungle."**

Soldiers said the insurgents showed signs that they had been training during a cease-fire that had kept violence here to a minimum since early June. U.S. units accustomed to the disorganized, hit-and-run strikes of insurgents in Baghdad and elsewhere were impressed to see the black-clad fighters of the Mahdi Army moving in coordinated units of five: typically three armed with rifles, which they fired to provide cover for the launch of rocket-propelled grenades, the weapon that has been most damaging to U.S. forces in Iraq.

Additional evidence of training: flash suppressors on rifles, simple Starlight-brand night-vision scopes and the evacuation of wounded. Weapons were secreted throughout the cemetery.

"These people are a trained militia," said 1st Lt. Ronald C. Krepps of the 1st Cavalry, who added that one mausoleum contained photos of Mahdi fighters performing battle drills.

"More professional," said Miyamasu, the 5th Regiment battalion commander whose troops provided Najaf reinforcement. "I don't mean to give them too much, but they're good. These guys really make us work to kill them, but in the end, they're dead." (And for every one who is, a hundred more come on.)

BAD AS IT GETS. TIME TO COME HOME, NOW!

Soldiers fight in the streets of Najaf, Iraq, on Monday. Sporadic but heavy fighting continued through the day and into the evening with insurgents firing rockets, mortars and small arms. — *Jim MacMillan / AP*

Long Beach Marine Hurt By Shrapnel

Aug. 17, 2004 By EBA HAMID, Mississippi SunHerald.com

LONG BEACH - With the phone in her hand, Carlotta Kennedy of Long Beach went numb.

She had just learned that her son, who was serving in Iraq, had been seriously wounded the previous morning.

"It's the phone call you hope not to ever get," Kennedy said. "I just went numb."

Marine Lance Cpl. Joseph P. Kennedy, 24, was on guard duty outside Fallujah on Thursday morning when he was hit by shrapnel from a mortar.

"The whole left side of his body was hit," said Kennedy, adding that her son was one of three soldiers on guard duty that morning. The other two did not suffer major injuries and did not have to be hospitalized.

After spending a short time in an Iraqi hospital, Kennedy was moved to Germany, where he was just taken out of intensive care and is awaiting transfer to a Navy hospital in Maryland. "As far as I know, he's doing great," Kennedy said. "He was very lucky that there was an opening in the Iraqi hospital."

Kennedy said her son should be moved to Maryland on Wednesday. When he arrives, he will be greeted by his parents, Carlotta and Robert, his sister, Amanda, and her husband, Rick, and his grandparents, Lou and Mike Scardino.

"They all reacted about the same way I did," Kennedy said. "They just go numb. We don't know how to react or what to say. You just have to try and keep your mind focused."

Kennedy has been in the Marines for two years, and he deployed to Iraq in March. He is a longtime Long Beach resident and a 2000 graduate of Long Beach High School.

Dutch Soldiers Under Fire In South

THE HAGUE, Aug 17 (AFP)

Dutch soldiers stationed in southern Iraq came under fire in Ar Rumaythah overnight but no one was hurt, a spokesman for the Dutch army said Tuesday.

"There was a short exchange of fire after the patrol was fired upon with small calibre weapons," army spokesman Nico van der Zee told AFP.

Several hours after the initial attack two mortars were fired on the Dutch camp near Ar Rumaythah but they missed the base.

The 160 soldiers stationed at the camp spent several hours in a bunker after the mortars were fired, Van der Zee said.

"It is not the first time this sort of incident happens," the spokesman added.

Babbling Batiste Admits Samarra Not Under U.S. Control: Silly Man Thinks He Can Scare Resistance With Bullshit: Collaborator Major General Killed

8/17/2004 Arabic News.com & (AFP)

The commander of the Iraqi national guard in Sameraa city to the north of Baghdad and his senior aide were killed by the bullets of unidentified gunmen.

One official at the ministry of the interior said that Maj. Gen. Ihsan al-Sadaji and Maj. Saddam Hussein were killed by the bullets of unidentified men on a road linking Sameraa to Baghdad.

He had "made a lot of enemies" following repeated US-led counterinsurgency operations in the town, most recently on Saturday.

An organization calling itself "the secret Ahwaz" claimed responsibility for the statement and said that the military wing of the secret Islamic military army and threatened what it described collaborators with the occupation forces and security personnel that they will face the same fate.

"We cut him to pieces and scattered the remains on the road," the group said. "Those who continue to work for the occupation forces will experience the same fate."

The attack came hours after a senior US commander warned his troops would not hesitate to launch further operations against the insurgents, like Saturday's joint air and ground assault in which the US military said 50 were killed.

"If we find enemies in Samarra, we will strike, because it's good for people of Samarra and it's good for people of Iraq," **said Major General John Batiste, commander of the 1st Infantry Division. (Where do they dig up these idiots?)**

"We need to take control of Samarra, for the sake of its 250,000 people."

In a meeting with Batiste, provincial governor Hamid Homood Shakti asked US troops to reopen a bridge in the city, **but the general refused until "terrorists and foreign fighters" leave Samarra. (But that's been done. General Batiste, who works for the terrorist Bush, leads the "foreign fighters", and he admits he's not in control of Samarra any more, so, open the bridge.)**

We have "tens of millions dollars in projects in Samarra, but you won't get a dime as long as the city is not working hands to hands with the coalition," he said. (Wow, that's really going to have the resistance shaking in their shoes!)

On the other hand, one Iraqi group calling itself the groups in defense of the holy shrines said it had kidnapped one person said to be an officer in the Iraqi intelligence named Osama Abdul Jabbar.

Unmanned U.S. Spy Plane Crashes

8.17.04 AP

An unmanned U.S. reconnaissance plane crashed north of the Iraqi capital Tuesday, the military said.

The U.S. Air Force MQ-1 Predator plane crashed near a U.S. base in Balad, 50 miles north of Baghdad, the military said in a statement.

It was not immediately known what caused the crash.

TROOP NEWS

Cursed With An Eager Lieutenant; Wounded Shelby Soldier Now Battles Nightmares, Injuries

Aug. 16, 2004 TOM GORDON, Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - **Some mornings, Tony Thompson opens his eyes and doesn't know that he's a lot closer to Birmingham than he is to Baghdad. Some nights, the bad dreams come and he finds himself reaching for an M-4 rifle that isn't there, and his parents have to reassure him that no one is attacking him, and that he doesn't have to fight back.**

Thompson, a 20-year-old Army specialist, is back home in Shelby County recovering from wounds he suffered in a mid-July ambush while on patrol in Baghdad.

He's also trying to become mentally whole. His shattered jaw is wired together, so he slurps his food through a large syringe. A crisscross scar marks the spot below his left ear where a surgeon went in to remove a bullet from his jaw and some shrapnel that had lodged in his throat.

During the ambush, some of that hot metal severed a nerve in his face, leaving him numb and unable to notice when he spills slurped food on his chin.

"I don't even taste food no more," the 2002 Montevallo High graduate said. "I just swallow it."

Swallowing food is easy compared to disgorging bad memories.

Broad-shouldered and clean-cut except for the wisp of beard now coming out of his chin, the 5-foot-7 Thompson was eager last week to talk through his involuntarily clenched teeth, roll his eyes and make a wrinkled frown when he disagreed with something.

"Some of the mornings I have woken up, I have not known where I was at," he said. "Sometimes I want to scream because I'm confused."

He did some screaming and more on the first night his family was able to see him after his wounding. Heavily sedated and with tubes attached to him, he had been flown from

Germany to Walter Reed Army Medical Center. As he came out of sedation, he began struggling and pulling the tubes loose.

"He kept saying somebody was trying to kill him," said Ronald Thompson, who tried to physically restrain his son and received a kick in the chin for his trouble. "He thought he was in Iraq... It took six of us to hold him down."

Much of his mind is marked by the seven months he spent in Iraq, driving a Humvee and taking and returning hostile fire.

"I still feel ... I gotta watch my back," he said.

The other day, he was standing in the kitchen when his mother was setting up her ironing board, and the board's sudden unfamiliar squeak caused him to whirl around in alarm.

While leaving his camp near Baghdad's Green Zone to go out on patrols was his regular routine in Iraq, he hasn't had much desire to get out now that he's home. If people see his scars or the wiring in his mouth, he thinks they might think he is some kind of freak.

He gets headaches, can hardly turn his head, and has bouts of pain in other parts of his body. One night the pain in his left leg became so intense that his parents took him to the Baptist Shelby emergency room. ***Thompson is scheduled to get out of the military next July, but he's worried that a prolonged stop-loss order could keep him past his discharge date.***

He says he joined the Army to pay for his college education, not make it a career.

During his time in Iraq, he directed some artillery fire, but mostly he was firing his M-4 rifle.

Usually he was behind the wheel of an armored Humvee, *driving his platoon commander, a lieutenant who was always eager to seek out "Ali Babas,"* the common name for insurgents. They were on the hunt for insurgents the night he was wounded. (In Vietnam, "eager" Lieutenants lived about 15 minutes in combat situations. For the troops it was a matter of survival. Lieutenants quickly learned not be so eager with all those stray rounds flying around in those very confusing situations where who knew what might happen.)

His memories of that night include the boom from an improvised explosive device that detonated as his Humvee passed it, showers of metal passing in front of his face, the heat he felt from the bullet and shrapnel that hit him, driving the crippled Humvee out of the ambush area with no tires on his side and two flat ones on the other, the sounds of soldiers yelling above the gunfire, and his awareness of a wetness spreading on his body that he knew was coming from the flow of his own blood.

His family was told he pulled some of his fellow soldiers to safety, but he doesn't remember much about that.

"I thought I was just doing my job," he said. "I was just trying to get out of the line of fire, get out of the kill zone."

Not long ago, the family had a barbecue dinner, but Thompson couldn't eat any of it unless it had been run through a blender. He was content to simply hold some of the meat close to his face, so he could sniff it.

"I'm torturing myself," he said. "But I get pleasure out of it."

Najaf Booby Trapped

August 18, 2004 By Stephen Farrell, 2004 News Limited & GEO World News

NAJAF: Heavy fighting broke out on Tuesday near the shrine of Imam Ali in the heart of the historic centre of Najaf where militiamen have been locked in a stand off with US-led Iraqi forces.

Mehdi Army guerillas have planted huge booby traps on almost every street. Few ordinary Najafis will now stray beyond their doorsteps.

Wilkes-Barre GI Hurt In Iraq Gets Big Welcome Home

08/17/2004 The Citizens Voice

Her son, Sgt. Travis Squadrito, 24, of Wilkes-Barre, who was serving in Iraq, told her he had just come out of surgery for injuries sustained in a Humvee accident.

"He said, 'Mom, I'm over in Iraq and I've been hurt pretty bad,'" Pappas recalled. "I almost passed out."

But on Sunday, Pappas experienced what every parent hopes for as she watched her son fly home at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport.

More than 40 family and friends greeted Squadrito at the airport as he returned home from Germany, where he endured more than six weeks of surgery.

It marked the first time in two-and-a-half years that Pappas had seen her son, who is a five-year Army veteran, and the reunion couldn't have come at a better time.

"We're just thankful to be with him and to spend some time together," she said.

Squadrito departed for Iraq in March and called his mother when he had access to a phone. Most of the time, she said, she didn't know where he was or what was happening.

Aside from the phone calls, Pappas watched the news regularly and shuddered each time a report of a roadside bomb or mortar attack was reported.

Needless to say, Pappas didn't get much sleep.

"It was pure torture for our whole family not knowing where he was," she said. "Unless you go through it, you don't understand it."

Squadrito's tour in Iraq took an unexpected turn for the worse in May when he was traveling with a convoy of soldiers. **According to Pappas, the convoy was maintaining a speed of 50 mph when a blinding sandstorm struck.**

It was impossible to see the slow-moving dump truck ahead, and Squadrito's Humvee hit the truck.

He was injured along with four other soldiers and suffered two compound fractures of his femur, a broken tibia, a broken right arm and his elbow was shattered.

With two metal rods in his legs and a new elbow, Squadrito returned home walking with a bad limp and a cane. But his attitude has remained intact.

"He says he's fine and he was a little embarrassed about everyone being at the airport to greet him," Pappas said. "He didn't think he deserved it because a lot of guys got hurt worse than him."

His wife, Giovanna, and 7-month-old daughter, Serena, are still at an Army base in Germany staying with her parents.

Squadrito will return to his base in Fort Carson, Colo., and his mother didn't know where he would be sent from there.

Pappas she hasn't talked to her son about his time in Iraq, and doesn't know if she will.

"I don't know if I want to know everything," she said.

"I'm just full of pride for him and all our troops. **It doesn't matter what you think of the war, you have to support the troops**." **(That's done by completely refusing to support the war or any politician who wants any soldier in Iraq one more day.)**

Fresh Meat For Bush's Imperial Glory: More Local Soldiers Head For Iraq

August 16, 2004 KATU TV

PORTLAND, ORE. - **Nearly a hundred soldiers from the 82nd Cavalry and the 218th Artillery joined their families and loved ones on Monday as they were formally mobilized for their upcoming duty in Iraq.**

The soldiers mobilized on Monday will be heading to Fort Bliss, Texas where they will undergo three months of training.

After their training is complete, they will go to Fort Polk, Louisiana for deployment to Iraq for a year.

There are more National Guard members deployed overseas now than there has been since the Korean War.

The Oregon National Guard alone has 715 members currently in Iraq, which accounts for 11 percent of their forces.

HOW MANY MORE FOR BUSH'S WAR?

A US Army soldier sleeps clutching his gun behind an armored vehicle in the streets of Najaf.(AFP/Karim Sahib)

Criminal Drill Instructors On The Loose

Letters To The Editor, Army Times
8.16.04

Mail is everyone's right

This is to any drill instructor who requires trainees to do push-ups for their mail and to any commander who allows it to happen.

As part of family support, we encourage families to write their loved ones as a morale builder while they are away from them, be it in combat or just basic training. How then are we helping the soldier's morale when we punish them by requiring them to do push-ups prior to receiving their letters from home?

I have heard it said, “I was just trying to help them be ready to pass their PT test.” This is no excuse.

You can have everyone doing push-ups for any number of things, and use it as a form of punishment for minor infractions, but **using it to receive something that is rightfully theirs is just wrong.**

Receiving mail is a right — not a privilege. We even grant this right to prisoners.

Hindering the movement of the mail in any fashion is against federal law, and by withholding it for any reason, you are violating those laws.

Staff Sgt. Jack W. Briggs Champaign, Ill.

Desertions Skyrocket

August 10, 2004 The Guardian

"The army reported **2,781 deserters in 2003 and 1,470 in the first five months of this year,** according to Lieutenant Colonel John Jessup, who collects army desertion data for the Pentagon."

War Profiteers Get Security Contracts To Guard Bases

The military is criticized for risking security at bases and for a process that awarded $1 billion in contracts without competitive bidding. [Los Angeles Times, August 12, 2004, Pg. 1] The Army is using private security guards to help protect dozens of U.S. military bases. **The work has been awarded to four firms---two of which got contracts without having to bid competitively.**

Soldiers Returning From Iraq Told To Shed Uniforms

8.17.04 TOKYO (AP)

Japanese soldiers returning from a tour of duty in Iraq this month got an unusual request from Tokyo airport authorities: don't wear your uniforms.

So a group of 82 soldiers coming back from their humanitarian mission in southern Iraq had to peel off their camouflage and buy suits and ties in Kuwait for the trip home, airport and government officials said Monday.

When they arrived at Tokyo International Airport at Narita on Aug. 7, the only hint of their military affiliation was the camouflage duffel bags on their carts. Japan's military was disappointed. ‘

"Uniforms are our symbol. We went to represent our country, so why can't we wear our uniforms?" Gen. Hajime Massaki, chief of staff of the Ground Self-Defence Forces, protested last week.

The mission, however, has divided public opinion, and Japanese authorities have been careful not to inflame critics who fear the deployment is violating the country's pacifist constitution.

Narita officials say they were concerned about protests and complaints from civil groups demanding the airport not be used for military activity.

The airport has been dogged by protests for decades, and transport ministry official Satoshi Yamaguchi said Monday the government had agreed that it would never allow the airport to be used for the military.

"We have to keep our promise, as long as we receive complaints from the nearby residents," Yamaguchi said.

"I believe the Defence Agency understands the situation."

The airline, Singapore Airlines, also asked Japanese soldiers to wear civilian clothes on board, airport officials said.

It wasn't the first time Japan's soldiers have been told to keep a low profile.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Occupation Stooge Fears Resistance Will Trap Politicians In Baghdad; “There Is A Fire In All Of Iraq”

8.17.04 By Michael Georgy (Reuters) & GEO World News & AP

In Baghdad 1,300 delegates sought to select an interim national assembly to oversee the government of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

The conference, scheduled to end on Tuesday, was extended to Wednesday after many delegates opposed a list of 81 candidates presented to the meeting by the pro-U.S. interim government, conference chairman Fouad Massoum said.

"If we stay here longer you will not be able to go home," Massoum said, referring to the shaky security situation.

“There is a fire in all of Iraq,” said Jawad al-Maliky of the Dawa Party.

Another bomb fell inside the heavily fortified compound known as the Green Zone, the seat of the caretaker government and US embassy, near the convention centre where a key national conference began its last day, a foreign news agency reported.

Two blasts shook the convention center where the conference in being held in Baghdad's heavily barricaded Green Zone. A soldier and a civilian security guard were slightly injured, the military said.

Al-Sadr aide Ali al-Yassiry, who was at the conference to talk to U.N. officials about the Najaf violence, said he also was slightly injured in the blast.

Senior Collaborator Killed In Ramadi

August 18, 2004 GEO World News

A senior Iraqi police officer was killed late on Monday in the flashpoint city of Ramadi, west of Baghdad.

Deputy Ramadi police chief Iyad Kharadan was killed at around 9:30 pm (1730 GMT) when attackers rammed his car killing him before he could escape, said police Captain Salah al-Dulaimi.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Americans Say The War Was A Mistake

8.17.04 By WILL LESTER, Associated Press Writer

The Associated Press poll was conducted by Ipsos-Public Affairs from Aug. 3-5.

The Iraq question about the United States' decision to go to war was asked of a half sample with a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points, and the other half sample was asked whether the "Bush administration" made the right decision to go to war.

(ASKED OF HALF SAMPLE)

All in all, thinking about how things have gone in Iraq since the United States went to war there in March 2003, do you think the United States ...

_Made the right decision, 48 percent
_**Made a mistake in going to war in Iraq, 50 percent**
_Not sure, 2 percent

(ASKED OF OTHER HALF OF SAMPLE)

All in all, thinking about how things have gone in Iraq since the United States went to war there in March 2003, do you think the Bush administration ...

_Made the right decision, 45 percent
_**Made a mistake in going to war in Iraq, 53 percent**
_Not sure, 2 percent

Among many different groups of Americans, a majority of people now say the war was a mistake. Those groups include minorities (65 percent), Northeasterners (60 percent), Democrats (80 percent), **people who make less than $25,000 a year (57 percent)** and Catholics (51 percent).

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to the E-mail address up top. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

Bush's Tomb

16 August 2004 By Patrick Sabatier, Liberation

Najaf is far from Washington, and Ali's Tomb has nothing in common with the White House. Therefore it's tempting in the torpor of August to discount the fighting in Najaf, telling oneself that there is nothing new under the Iraqi sun and that the test of strength in Shi'ite country is unimportant - except for Najaf's residents who are caught in the crossfire between the militiamen and the Marines.

Ali's Tomb, however, is a powder keg that could produce an explosion that would definitively bury the fragile attempt to clear a political path towards reconstruction in Iraq, an attempt a first step of which is yesterday's Baghdad Conference. **A Najaf explosion would certainly ruin George W. Bush's hope for a second term in the White House.**

Iraq's instability is already contributing to a rise in oil prices that is unwelcome for his chances. **A real Shi'ite rebellion would swell the toll of American soldiers killed in combat, another fatal gauge of his reelection chances.**

Hence coalition forces' procrastination from driving the "Mehdi Army" out of Ali's Tomb, which it has taken hostage. ***The Americans and their Iraqi allies don't know how to defuse the human bomb Moqtada's militias comprise without provoking an eruption.*** The assault on the tomb is therefore perhaps unlikely for tomorrow and negotiations continue behind the saber rattling and the gunfire.

It is, however, also risky to permit defiance of the authority of a government that already allows the Kurds to manage the north of the country and its Sunni enemies to reign in the center. To allow Moqtada to keep his grip on Najaf would turn the Baghdad power into an empty shell and would compel the United States to prolong an occupation that is very expensive for it, in dollars and in men.

That's why in either case Ali's Tomb could prove to be the cemetery of Bush's electoral ambitions.

Thought For The Day

From: DH
Aug 11, 2004
To: Veterans For Peace
Subject: Re: Reinstating Draft

Draft boards have no actual enforcement ability, other than issuing warrants for the local sheriff to execute.

I seem to recall hearing of several sheriffs in the hills of WV & KY that declined to serve such warrants during the Viet Nam War. Something to do with knowing the families concerned, and the unlikely chance that their son would be given to the draft without a fight. More than a few reportedly refused to go back in mountain hollows to risk a shootout over the serving of draft board papers.

The draft legislation waiting to be passed after the election includes provisions for the drafting of females

My only daughter will be 17 next month. If it comes down to it, I'll give serious consideration to calling the local TV station to send a film crew over to see just how much the local sheriff is willing to sacrifice in order to serve draft papers on her.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Collaborator Police Useless; Can’t Even Kill Unarmed Old Man

18/08/2004 By Adrian Blomfield in Najaf, telegraph.co.uk

Najaf's police force has proved largely ineffective. **Many officers are so terrified of retribution if they are recognised that they wear scarves and balaclavas to mask their identities.**

Their jitters make them trigger-happy. At the weekend, a dozen officers stationed outside the Najaf Sea Hotel unleashed a hail of bullets at an elderly man in a battered car they suspected of being a terrorist.

Luckily, and perhaps illustrating their lack of training, all the bullets missed.

OCCUPATION ISN’T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!

THIS IS NOT AN INTENTIONAL SATIRE. CHECK THE URL

Google co-founders Larry Page, left, and Sergey Brin are seen at their company's headquarters Thursday, Jan. 15, 2004, in Mountain View, Calif. Google has asked federal regulators to give final approval to the paperwork required for its stock sale. If the Securities and Exchange Commission approves, Google can close the auction that's determining the share price and notify successful bidders as early as 5 p.m. EDT Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2004 (AP Photo/Ben Margot) Height (pixels): 301 Width (pixels): 512

http://www.tuscaloosanews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20040817/API/408170841

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Kerry Promises At Least Another Year Of Blood And Death In Iraq

Patricia Wilson, Reuters, GRAND CANYON, Ariz., August 9, 2004

Speaking to reporters from the Powell's Landing on the rim of the Grand Canyon above a mile-deep drop, Kerry also said reducing U.S. troops in Iraq significantly **by next August was "an appropriate goal."**

"My goal, my diplomacy, my statesmanship is to get our troops reduced in number and I believe if you do the statesmanship properly, I believe if you do the kind of alliance building that is available to us, that it's appropriate to have a goal of reducing the troops **over that period of time,**" he said.

Puke

By Jody Wilgoren The New York Times Tuesday 10 August 2004

Kerry Says His Vote on Iraq Would Be the Same Today
Grand Canyon National Park, Ariz. - **Senator John Kerry said Monday that he would have voted to give the president the authority to invade Iraq even if he had known all he does now about the apparent dearth of unconventional weapons or a close connection to Al Qaeda.**

The Commander And Thief Speaks

President Bush said Monday that coalition forces were "making pretty good progress about stabilizing Najaf." August 10, 2004 By Abdul Hussein Al-Obeidi, *Associated Press*

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